

**TREE HEARING  
RIDGE ROAD / FARM HILL SCHOOL  
MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2015  
TIME: 5:30 P.M.  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
ROOM 208  
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT**

**Present:** Jane Harris – Chair, Urban Forestry Commission  
Dana Whitney – City Arborist/Forester  
Howard Reid – 6 Newtown Street  
Maria Holzberg – 192 Coleman Road  
David Brown – 35 Clover Street  
David & Carol Schulz – 409 Ridge Road  
Eli Rascati & Judith Clayton – 30 Clover Street  
Wendy Black-Nasta – 377 Ridge Road  
Beth, John & Jack Kilian – 210 Ridge Road  
Justin Kopit – 553 Ridge Road

**Staff Present:** William J. Russo – Public Works Director, Tree Warden

**INTRODUCTION:**

William Russo introduced himself as Director of Public Works and Tree Warden. He explained the process and the goal involving the tree removal. He made aware of the fact that Dana Whitney, City Arborist, along with Jane Harris, Chair of Urban Forestry Commission, are the decision makers for anything that involves trees. They are both aware of the proposed project and the tree removal as well as the future goal for what will be planted to replace the tree.

Director Russo wanted to make the residents that were involved in protesting the removal of the trees aware of the process for removal. Based on this tree hearing, a decision has to be made within 3 days based on the outcome and then posted in the Town Clerk's office. The tree cannot be removed until 10 days after the notice of decision has been posted. If a resident would like to take the case to court during the 10 day span, they may do so.

The schools came to Public Works regarding the issue with parking and the busses. The intersection is dangerous along with the associated speeding conducted by oncoming traffic in front of the school. The plan for the major paving project to benefit the children has been assessed by Engineering, Police Department, Planning & Zoning and Economic Development.

Director Russo stated that the tree itself would need to be removed regardless of if the project were going to occur or not. Dana Whitney stated that there are some aspects that are not obvious to the layman. The tree is "in fruit" currently, when normally sugar maples do not fruit at this time of the year.

Jane Harris, Chair of the Urban Forestry Commission, stated that this tree clearly grew next to an older sugar maple basing off of the stump next to it, the height of the tree and the spaces between the branches. These aspects make the tree off-balance. The tree is losing a lot of bark and has been attacked by wildlife. There is about 15% deadwood on the top of the tree which is the only part that is

actively growing. If construction around the tree were to take place, the tree would be dead within a year and a half due to all of the impact to the roots and the compacted soil. This would be a waste of money and resources to try to save the tree.

Director Russo mentioned a meeting that the Board of Education is holding on June 23, 2015 for any concerns with the project itself and neighborhood issues.

**PLAN OF ACTION:**

Director Russo stated that the schools were seeking the advice of Public Works about a year and a half ago looking for solutions. There are 340 kids attending the school, 38 parking spaces, 72 staff employed and 6 busses that arrive in the morning. The intersection is unsafe for crossing guards and young kids with the high speed on-coming traffic. One of the recommendations is to have an engineer through a hired firm add additional parking spaces. The bus loop will come from the existing driveway to drop the kids off at the front door and the intersection will be reconfigured. The island will no longer exist and there will be a 4-way stop sign coming from East Ridge Road headed to Ridge Road. The tree is right in the middle of the loop where all of the work will be occurring.

Jane Harris stated that as a part of the project, 3-5 trees will be planted in front of the school where the triangle is currently located. This will eventually become a landscaped piece of property with a walking path through the center of the area. Sugar maples are not typically planted anywhere near the street due to damage from road salt.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Judith Clayton, 30 Clover Street resident, asked for elaboration on the project. Project described above under "Plan of Action" paragraph 1.

Howard Reid, 6 Newtown Street resident, mentioned a previous tree removal project on Newtown Street and how the City had offered to replant one or more trees. He stated that he took up the offer and that the City planted a beautiful tree. He believes that individual cases need to be looked at carefully and the specific reasoning towards the removal of any tree should be taken into consideration. This specific tree removal is a reasonable plan as long as it's accompanied by the work that has been suggested.

David Brown, 35 Clover Street resident, mentioned his disagreement regarding the intersection. He believes he has seen too many trees be taken down that were not ready nor had a reason to be taken down. This specific sugar maple is about 80-90 years old which he feels makes it a legacy tree, especially when they live about 150 years. He also doesn't agree with the plan for the construction and believes it is turning a residential entrance into an industrial entrance. He considers the school related issues just temporary issues and feels that the tree removal should be held off until more solid and concrete evidence is reconciled.

Justin Kopit, 553 Ridge Road resident, stated that he does not want to see another sugar maple taken down as there have been many taken down in the past. He believes that the sidewalk by Farm Hill Road doesn't reflect any tree replanting's followed by the removals that have occurred in the past. He suggested replanting sugar maples further from the road and if not possible, to replace with other trees.

Maria Holzberg, 192 Coleman Road resident and former Mayor, stated that she received a call from Howard whom asked if the Garden Club can help the traffic circle fit in with the neighborhood. After

viewing the plans from Director Russo, there is a proposed 10' concrete walkway in which some benches can be placed alongside. There is a Scarlett Oak tree on one side of the walkway which can be balanced out with some Dogwood trees on the other side of the walkway along with some plantings of flowers. Maria stated that she is open to working with the neighbors to come up with and work on something comparative to the neighborhood surroundings.

John Kilian, 210 Ridge Road resident, stated that he's seen the way the traffic situation occurs. The lines of busses are going one way, while the parents are going another way and his children have to walk through the traffic to get into the school. Busses and passenger cars need to be prevented from crossing paths. He believes action does need to be taken, even though he does like the tree and appreciates the thought towards harvesting it along with all of the help from the Garden Club.

Wendy Black-Nasta, 377 Ridge Road resident, stated that she is against the removal of the tree. She is also for the safety of the children that attend the school seeing as how as her children have attended it in the past. However, she lets everyone park in her driveway during the school drop-off/pick-up times. She feels that it is her driveway that is immediately affected by this project in ways that she is unsure of. In the past, a Sugar Maple was removed from her front yard near her driveway. She had an arborist take a look the tree after parents had mentioned that it looked as though it was going to fall. She later found out that the tree could have been topped off instead of being removed. Wendy stated that she now regrets the removal and feels that designing around the schools tree can be done. She offered her services as an artist to design and create ways around the removal of the tree so that she will not regret witnessing another tree removal.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Director Russo enforced the fact that he has confidence in the final outcome of the work and planning originating with Dana Whitney, Jane Harris and Maria Holzberg. As there was no further discussion, the tree hearing was adjourned 6:52 P.M.